

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 13-108—sHB 6358

Education Committee

AN ACT UNLEASHING INNOVATION IN CONNECTICUT SCHOOLS

SUMMARY: This act:

1. allows high school students to earn academic credits using mastery-based standards, instead of traditional coursework, based on guidelines established by the State Board of Education (SBE);
2. establishes an eight-member task force to study education mandate relief for high-performing school districts;
3. eliminates an annual interdistrict meeting requirement related to the Open Choice attendance program; and
4. requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to study issues relating to local partnerships for advancing the teaching profession and submit the results and recommendations to the Education Committee by June 30, 2015.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013, except for the task force and local partnership study provisions, which are effective upon passage.

§ 1 — MASTERY-BASED ACADEMIC CREDITS

The act creates an additional, non-traditional method for high school students to earn academic credits towards graduation by demonstrating mastery based on competency and performance standards, in accordance with guidelines adopted by SBE. Existing law allows students to earn credit nontraditionally by completing coursework (1) at an accredited institution of higher education or (2) online, in accordance with local or regional board of education policy. By law, local and regional boards of education have the discretion to determine eligible credits, as long as the credit curriculum matches course requirement subject matter.

§ 2 — OPEN CHOICE INTERDISTRICT ATTENDANCE PROGRAM

The act eliminates a requirement related to the Open Choice interdistrict attendance program. It removes the requirement that each regional education service center (RESC) organize an annual meeting of school district representatives to receive a count of available spaces for out-of-district students for the upcoming school year. RESCs must still provide an annual count of these open spaces to SDE by April 15, as required under prior law, but the act allows them to collect the numbers by any means they choose.

§ 4 — TASK FORCE TO STUDY MANDATE RELIEF

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Duties

The act creates a task force to study education mandate relief for high-performing school districts, including (1) reviewing mandates in state statutes and regulations and recommending which ones may be waived for high-performing districts and (2) exploring how such districts can work with SDE to relieve other administrative mandates. In doing so, the task force may consult with the governor's Red Tape Review and Removal Task Force.

The act defines a "high performing school district" as one that is among the:

1. 15 school districts with the highest absolute district performance index (DPI) for the 2012-13 school year (see BACKGROUND);
2. five school districts with the greatest rate of progress in DPI during the school years 2010-11 through 2012-13; or
3. five school districts with the greatest decrease in the achievement gap for students eligible for free or reduced price lunches, as measured by the DPI for such students during the school years 2010-11 through 2012-13.

Membership

Task force members are appointed by legislative leaders as follows:

1. two each by the House speaker and Senate president pro tempore and one each by the House and Senate majority and Senate minority leaders, each of whom may be a legislator and
2. one superintendent of a high-performing school district, appointed by the House minority leader.

Appointing authorities must make their appointments by July 6, 2013 and fill any vacancies. The House speaker and Senate president pro tempore must select the chairpersons from among the members, and the chairpersons must schedule the first meeting by August 5, 2013.

Report and Termination

The task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Education Committee by October 1, 2013. It terminates on the date it submits the report or on October 1, 2013, whichever is later.

BACKGROUND

DPI

A school district's DPI is its students' weighted performance on the statewide mastery tests in (1) reading, writing, and mathematics in grades three through eight and 10 and (2) science in grades five, eight, and 10.

OLR Tracking: MGS:JO:VR:ts